

Someone I love is gay. I've known for a long time and it's never mattered, but maybe someone you know is gay and it does matter.

Maybe you just found out; or

maybe you're hurt;

maybe it's changed your life;

maybe it has made you take a new look at things;

maybe it's made you cry;

maybe it's answered some questions you've had for a long time...

Amid all the "maybes" one certainty stands out--you're not alone.

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays was founded by and for people exactly like you. Parents FLAG is devoted to helping parents of gay children come to a better understanding of homosexuality and reaffirming the bonds between all members of the family. We are reaching ever-increasing numbers of parents who have had no one to talk to and no sources of accurate information.

The Third International Convention of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays is being held in Denver this fall. The enclosed information is provided with the hope that you will disseminate it throughout your congregation. Please post the materials in a conspicuous place--a bulletin board or community events center. You may also publish this in your weekly bulletin.

Parents FLAG, with your efforts, wants to facilitate increased understanding in the families of those parishioners affected in some way by homosexuality. We are offering an outreach of love such as John did in Chapter 14, verse 12 of his timeless gospel:

"...love one another just as I have loved you..."

We are hoping that the convention will provide the impetus to spark other parents and friends to open their hearts to their gay and lesbian loved ones and strive together to enjoy the delight that is love and the comfort that is family.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



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THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
The Fairmont Hotel, 1750 Welton Street, Denver, CO
September 28 - October 1, 1984

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THEME: "The Three R's of Understanding Gay/Lesbian Issues:
REALITIES, RIGHTS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES"

Friday, September 28, AFTERNOON SESSION: \$10.00

- 1:00 - 1:30 Opening Session
1:30 - 2:30 Three Workshops:
 "Small Town Survival for Closeted Parents" (repeated on Sunday)
 "How To Keep Parents' Groups Healthy" (repeated on Saturday)
 "Personal Storytelling: Mother-Daughter Relationships"
2:45 - 3:45 Three Workshops:
 "Holistic Perspectives on Health Issues for Gays and Lesbians"
 "Psychological Growth and Development of the Gay/Lesbian Child"
 "How Do New Parents Cope?"
4:00 - 5:00 Rosh Hashanah Service (by members of Tikvat Shalom) -- OPEN TO ALL
5:00 - 6:30 Welcome Reception and Autographing Party (with authors Mary Borhek,
 Betty Fairchild, Tom Sauerman, Sylvia Pennington, and Mary Calderone)

Friday, September 28, EVENING ENTERTAINMENT: \$10.00

- 8:30 - 9:30 Concert by Mother-Daughter Team of Henia and Dovidia Goodman (with
 Ann Wallace)

Saturday, September 29, MORNING SESSION: \$10.00

- 9:00 -10:30 General Session: The Issue of Realities
 Federico Pena, Mayor of Denver, views "Human Rights"
 Dr. Mary Calderone: "The Knowns and Unknowns About Homosexuality in
 the Medical/Scientific Community"
10:45 -12:00 Four Workshops:
 "Coming of Age in the Gay and Lesbian Movement" (repeated on Sunday)
 "The Heart of Every Successful Group -- GOOD FACILITATORS" (repeated
 on Sunday)
 "Creative Ways of Educating the Public"
 "How To Keep Parents' Groups Healthy" (repeat from Friday)

Saturday, September 29, LUNCHEON: \$13.00

- 12:15 - 1:45 Annual Business Reports (Adele Starr, President of the Federation of
 Parents F.L.A.G., presiding)
 Guest Remarks: Senator Regis Groff, Colorado State Legislature

Saturday, September 29, AFTERNOON SESSION: \$10.00

- 2:00 - 3:15 General Session: The Issue of Rights:
 Dr. Marjorie Leidig, psychotherapist: "Feminism; Sexism & Homophobia"
 Dr. James Tinney, Associate Professor, Howard University: "Homophobia
 in the Minority Community; Legislative Overview"
3:30 - 4:30 Four Workshops:
 "The Denver 'Church Model' Workshop" (Part 1)
 "Are Long-term Relationships Possible?: TWO MEN"
 "Seeing Is Believing ... and therein lies the rub!" (media portrayal:
 racism, sexism, and homophobia)
 "Update on A.I.D.S."
4:30 - 5:30 Four Workshops:
 "The Denver 'Church Model' Workshop" (Part 2)
 "WINDFIRE: Gay and Lesbian Teenagers"
 "Divided and Conquered: Sexism in the Gay Movement and Homophobia in
 the Women's Movement"
 "Legal Problems Unique to Gays and Lesbians"

Saturday, September 29, EVENING ENTERTAINMENT: \$10.00

7:30 - 9:30 Variety Show (including the debut of the world's first Festival Chorus of Parents F.L.A.G. of 140 voices)

Sunday, September 30, WORSHIP SERVICE (no charge)

8:30 - 9:30 Ecumenical Worship Service

Sunday, September 30, MORNING SESSION: \$5.00

9:30 - 9:45 Continental Breakfast

9:45 -10:30 Regional Meetings; Election of National Board Members

10:45 -12:00 Four Workshops:

"Coming of Age in the Gay and Lesbian Movement" (repeat from Saturday)

"The Heart of Every Successful Group -- GOOD FACILITATORS" (repeat from Saturday)

"Spouses from TWO PERSPECTIVES" (former wife of a gay man; lesbian/ former wife of a straight man)

"Small Town Survival for Closeted Parents" (repeat from Friday)

Sunday, September 30, LUNCHEON: \$13.00

12:15 - 1:45 Annual Business Meeting (Adele Starr, President of the Federation of Parents F.L.A.G., presiding)

Guest Remarks: Councilwoman Cathy Donahue, City & County of Denver

Sunday, September 30, AFTERNOON SESSION: \$10.00

2:00 - 3:30 General Session: The Issue of Responsibilities:

Dr. Sally Geis, sociologist and national leader in the United Methodist Church: "Reaching the Religious Community"

Responses: Dr. Tom Sauerman, Lutheran Church

Rev. Merrill Follansbee, Presbyterian Church

3:45 - 4:45 Four Workshops:

"Why Do We Avoid Sexual Stereotypes?: Our Son 'the Queen' and Our Daughter 'the Diesel Dyke'"

"Reaching Out To Minority Parents"

"Are Long-term Relationships Possible?: TWO WOMEN"

"Spiritual Dimensions of the Gay/Lesbian Journey"

Sunday, September 30, AWARDS BANQUET: \$25.00

6:00 - 7:00 Reception in Grand Ballroom Foyer

7:00 -10:00 Annual Awards Banquet in the Grand Ballroom:

Special Awards, Hans Christian Andersen Awards, Oscar Wilde Awards

Closing Keynote Address:

Bishop Melvin E. Wheatley, Jr.: "There Goes Another One"

SPECIAL MUSIC

Monday, October 1, BOARD MEETINGS: (no charge)

9:30 -11:00 Open Meeting: Convention Wrap-Up; Planning New Directions (input to the National Board from individual members)

11:00 - 5:00 National Board Meeting (for new and old Board members; OPEN meeting)

Friday AFTERNOON SESSION \$ 10.00

Friday EVENING ENTERTAINMENT \$ 10.00

Saturday MORNING SESSION \$ 10.00

Saturday LUNCHEON \$ 13.00

Saturday AFTERNOON SESSION \$ 10.00

Saturday EVENING ENTERTAINMENT \$ 10.00

Sunday MORNING SESSION \$ 5.00

Sunday LUNCHEON \$ 13.00

Sunday AFTERNOON SESSION \$ 10.00

Sunday AWARDS BANQUET \$ 25.00

TOTAL (if purchased separately) \$116.00

Contact:

Parents F.L.A.G./Denver

P.O. Box 18901

Denver, CO 80218

(303) 333-0286

(Full Registration: \$75.00)

news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 15, 1984

CONTACT: Chuck Morris (303) 861-2210
Shirley Weaver (303) 755-1304



PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS PLAN THIRD ANNUAL CONVENTION IN DENVER

Several hundred delegates from the United States, Canada and Europe will gather in Denver, Colorado September 28-October 1, 1984 as the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Inc. (Parents FLAG) convenes its third annual international convention.

The organization of family members and friends of homosexuals began in 1973 as a result of the annual gay pride parade in New York City. Founded by an elementary school teacher from Westchester, New York who was "tired of hiding my gay son," Parents FLAG has worked with thousands of parents and friends of gays and lesbians. The organization now boasts several thousand members in over 125 cities.

Parents FLAG's first convention was held in 1982 in Los Angeles. Last year New York City hosted the conference and Denver submitted the winning bid to host this year's convention, which will be the largest yet according to Shirley Weaver and Gay Bossart, co-chairs of the event.

The three-day conference will begin at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, September 28 and will feature 21 workshops, 6 keynote speakers, 2 luncheons, an awards banquet, and the world's first "mixed" chorus of gay men, lesbians, and the mothers, fathers, relatives and friends of gay people. The new chorus will debut during an evening of entertainment planned for conventioners on Saturday, September 29.

Federico Peña, Mayor of Denver and an outspoken supporter of human rights for all people, will be the convention's opening speaker. Dr. Mary Calderone, former medical director of Planned Parenthood of America and former executive director and president of the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States, will join Mayor Peña with her keynote address at the first general session on Saturday morning, September 29.

-- MORE --

PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS
PLAN THIRD ANNUAL CONVENTION IN DENVER 2-2-2

Other keynote addresses will be delivered by Bishop Melvin Wheatley, Jr. of the United Methodist Church and gay activist Dr. James Tinney, the first upfront gay to be granted faculty tenure at Howard University in the nation's capital. Bishop Wheatley recently made headlines by appointing the first openly gay Methodist minister in the United States to an active ministry in Denver.

Because the convention falls on the Jewish holiday of Rosh Hashanah, a special service will be held for Jewish families on Friday afternoon, September 28. One Jewish mother of a lesbian daughter who will be a featured entertainer and workshop presenter at the convention is Henia Goodman, who survived the Nazi concentration camps of World War II. Mrs. Goodman, a concert pianist, will perform with her daughter Dovidia in concert on Friday night, using the grand piano of the Fairmont Hotel, where the convention will be held.

Topics for the three days of workshops will range from how to help parents who have just learned of their child's homosexuality to "Small Town Survival for Closeted Parents." Other workshops centered around the convention theme of "The Three R's of Understanding Gay/Lesbian Issues: Realities, Rights and Responsibilities" will include an update on the AIDS epidemic, reaching out to and how to deal with the conservative church community, and the legal problems unique to gay men and lesbians.

Co-chairs Weaver and Bossart also announced that two best-selling authors who are parents of gay children will appear at an autograph reception during the convention. Mary Borhek, who wrote My Son Eric and Coming Out To Parents, will join Betty Fairchild, founder of the Denver chapter of Parents FLAG and author of Now That You Know, a guide for parents who have discovered their child's same-sex orientation, at the 5:00 p.m. Friday reception.

The Parents FLAG convention co-chairs may be contacted at (303) 333-0286, a 24-hour answering service, or by writing c/o Parents FLAG/ Denver, P.O. Box 18901, Denver, CO 80218.



NATIONAL NEWS

October 1983

AIDS: Any Risk for the General Population?

New diseases have appeared throughout human history and attacked populations where they were previously unknown, producing epidemics. Most scientists working on the present AIDS epidemic believe it to be just such an infectious invasion.

AIDS has been identified as a new disease in the United States in the past two years, and has now also been reported from 15 cities in other countries. About 70% of the AIDS patients are homosexual or bisexual men, and the other 30% include users of intravenous drugs (both male and female), Haitian immigrants, children of the two latter groups, hemophiliac patients and recipients of blood transfusions.

AIDS causes a breakdown in the body's normal self-defense mechanism against infection and development of malignant tumors. The cause is not yet known; it is possibly a new virus or a new form of some previously known infection. Whatever the agent, the breakdown of this normal immune protection leaves the body vulnerable to attack from organisms which normally cause no disease in healthy persons, or only mild temporary illness. In the present epidemic, the disease is virulent, and the mortality is high; approximately 75% of cases have died within two years after appearance of symptoms.

Description of the AIDS outbreak in public media has produced considerable anxiety among both homosexual and heterosexual persons. This level of anxiety is not warranted for the general population in the City. Medical research to date indicates that the AIDS infection must enter the blood system of a person by intimate personal contact with a case of AIDS. This contact may be by:

- (1) Direct, probably repeated, sexual contact with an infected person (who may not show symptoms at the time).
- (2) Injection of blood from an infected person, as in sharing illegal intravenous drugs with an unsterile hypodermic needle.
- (3) More rarely, by blood transfusions or injections of clotting agents used by hemophiliac patients.

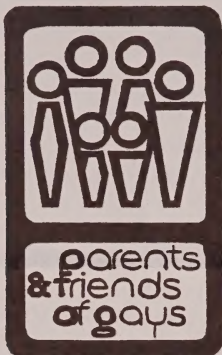
Only 7% of all cases are reported in persons who either do not have the risk factors listed above, or for whom risk information is not completely known. Tens of thousands of health workers

(cont'd page 2)

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No claim is made to the exclusive right to use
"Parents & Friends Of Gays", apart from the mark as
shown.

For: COUNSELING, GUIDANCE AND SUP-
PORT SERVICES FOR PARENTS, FAMILIES
AND FRIENDS OF GAY PERSONS, in CLASS

Ser. No. 342,686, filed Dec. 21, 1981.

DAVID SOROKA, Examining Attorney

As a matter of interest to some, the National Office takes this opportunity to present the official logo of PFOG.

Soon after the incorporation of NF/PFOG, the Board of Directors found it advisable to copyright our National Directory... and to register our logo with the appropriate offices of the U.S. Government.

After more than 2 years of government "processing and review"... we were notified this spring that our application had been confirmed... and our 'official service mark' was duly registered with the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office.

The original design (from which this logo has been adapted) by Andy Hoffman was presented to and accepted by the First National Conference of PFOG, Washington, D.C., 1979 as its official logo.

As in 1979, PFOG again expresses its appreciation to Andy for his 'service' to PFOG.

AIDS:(cont'd from page 1)

have been caring for AIDS patients in hospitals for the past four years, and not one has developed the condition as a result of patient care contact during this time. Researchers who have the most advanced information about this disease complex hold firmly that at our present state of knowledge, no person should expect to develop AIDS from merely casual contact.

Touching objects handled by the AIDS patients, spending time in the same house or room with a patient or the same work-place, eating in a restaurant frequented by possible patients, etc., etc., does not spread the disease.

These comments are offered to relieve or eliminate unnecessary stress and concern in the general population created by unwarranted anxiety about infection with AIDS from casual contacts with possible AIDS patients.

May 1983San Francisco Department of Public Health
Bureau Communicable Disease Control

During the first week of October, 1983, the annual conference of the American Ass'n. for Marriage & Family Therapists and Counselors was held in WDC. As a matter of getting acquainted with this family service organization and its membership's services throughout the country, a representative of PFOG spent most of one day in attendance and has provided the following observations:

(1) of the several thousand persons attending this conference, less than 60 persons chose to attend the single 3 hour workshop on FAMILY SEXUALITY which addressed an impressive variety of sexual concerns and therapy techniques;

Gay-Lesbian concerns was one of six general topics; although this subject was given "equal time" by the presenter, it failed noticeably (in the opinion of this reporter) to generate the degree of interest and discussion that was evidenced in other topics such as: Extramarital Sex, Anorgasmia, Erectile Concerns, Incest, and Sexual Addiction.

(2) the 'free literature table' further provided an unusual insight as to the interests and attitudes of individual family counselors and therapists.

a stack of 50 PFOG brochures were strategically placed among a variety of other materials expected to be of interest to conference attendees; and after 3 hours of constant 'surveillance' the following observations are reported: (1) 50 brochures lasted 3 hours during which time approx 550 persons surveyed the table... most are sure to have noticed "we are parents of gay persons"; only 137 persons (25%) expressed any interest by picking up our brochure and looked at inside information before replacing on table; an additional 47 persons (8.5%) picked up and kept for further reference the PFOG brochure... one person took two, another three.

Other observations were: a preponderance of persons were particularly interested in brochures re programs and workshops that would enhance and validate their personal accreditations; 3/5ths of the persons (28) who picked up and kept our brochure appeared to be over 40 years old; 3 men and 1 woman were observed furtively concealing the PFOG brochure under adjacent material before picking it up; only 3 persons directed the attention of another to our brochure;.....

An overall assessment of observed behavior and attitudes of professional counselors and therapists towards homosexuality indicates:

1. a surprising lack of interest, concern and awareness of family problems caused by or related to variant sexualities;

2. a high degree of homophobia that exists among counselors and therapists;

3. a definite need to encourage family counselors and therapists to recognize, acknowledge and apply themselves with greater assiduity to the many and various problems attributable to 'different sexualities';

4. the necessity to promote educational programs that will dispel the discrimination and prejudice that reflect in the policies and practices of most health and social service providers;

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Thanks to the "CANTON 5" composed of Methodist, Presbyterian, Unitarian, and Catholic clergy plus a University Chaplain a parents' support group is being formed in Canton, NY.. The prospects of this group are particularly exciting and to the best of our knowledge it is the first support group to have such auspicious sponsorship. PFOG expresses its appreciation and best wishes to the "Canton 5" for the success of their endeavors and ministry to their community.

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"GROWING UP FREE: Raising Your Child in the 80's"

(McGraw-Hill, publishers)

This excellent book written by Letty Cottin Pogrebin.....includes as Chapter 15: "Homosexuality, Hysteria, and Children: How not to Be a Homophobic Parent." The author devotes 25 of the book's 595 pages to a careful disputation of "three of the most erroneous assumptions of our culture": (1) "Sex roles help determine sexuality (orientation)!" (2) "Specific ingredients make a child homosexual" (with examination of the genetic, hormonal, conditional response and psychoanalytic theories), (3) "Homosexuality is one of the worst things that can happen to anyone." After debunking the myths and stereotypes, she explains the ways in which homophobia harms all children and their parents. In conclusion she presents "TEN COMMANDMENTS for NON - HOMOPHOBIC PARENTHOOD":

1. Don't try to "prevent" homosexuality.
2. Don't worry about homosexual "conversion."
3. Don't make children feel they are the "wrong" sex.
4. Don't use sex stereotypes as a vaccine against homosexuality.
5. Don't assume anyone can "just change" their sexual orientation.
6. Don't make it hard for children to love the other sex.
7. Don't underestimate the father's role.
8. Don't react intemperately to children's questions, interests or confessions.
9. Don't confuse transsexualism (and transvestism) with homosexuality.
10. Don't let other people's homophobia hurt your children.

REQUEST for PEN - FRIENDS

"We live in a very small community and there is no one I can talk to.....can you please put me in touch with another parent or someone who is in a similar situation and would be willing to be a pen-friend"?

This and similar requests have come from different parts of the country..... from many who do not have access to supportive counseling services.

In response to these requests, the Nat'l. Office in WDC has implemented and is coordinating a PEN-FRIEND CLUB. Persons interested in participating in the correspondence program should contact:

P-F Correspondents
c/o NF/PFOG
5715 16th St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20011

[basic rules will be provided to each individual participating in the P-F Club so as to assure and preserve confidentiality and privacy]

The following letter provides an insight as to how and why some parent support groups are formed:

"I am a gay who has recently come out. My parents have been very supportive; however many of my friends are greatly concerned as to how their parents would handle it if they came out and there is no Parents of Gays groups in this area."

"We would appreciate any information you can send on how to start, run and promote such a group for parents".

[for those who feel that gays are interested only in themselves,.....this letter provides a shining example of love, concern and foresightedness.....

REMINDER: the PFOG Directory Service is currently verifying and updating all present listings in the PFOG National Directory; all contact persons, counselors, support groups and other service providers are requested to fill out the form on the last page of this newsletter and forward ASAP to PFOG Directory Service, 5715 16th St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20011 .

The (PFOG) National Committee on Social Concerns and Human Rights.....

requests your support and cooperation by providing the committee with local articles and notices regarding proposed actions or legislation that pertains to the welfare of gay persons;

All parents & friends of gay persons can be of immense help in keeping the Committee abreast of current local attitudes that reflect upon the quality of life for gay persons;

Please forward all information promptly to: NATIONAL COMMITTEE, SCAHR, 5715 16th St., NW, Washington D.C., 20011.

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IN MEMORIUM:

The National Office, PFOG sadly announces the recent demise of its one and only typewriter, BERTHA.

Manufactured by the IBM Company in 1960, Bertha served various departments of the U.S. Government before being retired in 1979.

After two years of 'retirement' Bertha found a way (thru surplus property sales) to continue a life of usefulness and service with PFOG.

In 1981 Bertha became the single most important component of PFOG programs and services. The calamity of Bertha's loss has been temporarily assuaged by the rental of a 'replacement' machine.

"In lieu of flowers" the Nat'l. Office requests that monetary contributions be made to Bertha's "Memorial Replacement Fund" by parents, friends and others who wish to express their concern and sympathy.

Checks/money orders should be made payable to NF/PFOG, 5715 16th. St., NW., Washington, D.C. 20011.

CHILDREN of Gays & Lesbians (COGL) is a newly formed support group in the Ft. Wayne, IN. area for youngsters who discover a parent's variant sexuality.

This much needed self-help rap group provides the opportunity for youngsters to share their mutual and personal concerns.....and contributes to their improved understanding of human sexuality; hopefully family relationships can be strengthened and preserved. This group facilitated by Noel Maze meets bi-monthly; interested persons may call 219-422-1766 for further information.

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NOTE to parent group facilitators:

the development of a national network of support groups for CHILDREN OF GAYS (COGs) has been undertaken by Llana Lloyd who has a gay parent. If you see the need for a COGs support group in your area please contact Llana at 8306 Wilshire Blvd., #222, Beverly Hills, CA 90211 or call 213-738-1008.

Our National Directory now includes COG support groups in various parts of the country.

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The Lambda Resource Center for the Blind is a volunteer service organization serving blind persons who are gay. They record books and a quarterly magazine containing articles from the gay media for distribution at cost to print

For a list of titles that have been recorded you may contact LRC, 3225 No. Sheffield, Chicago, IL 60657.

Recent recordings include THE JOY OF GAY SEX by Dr. Chas. Silverstein & Edmund White; LOVING SOMEONE GAY by Don Clark; CHRISTIANITY, SOCIAL TOLERANCE & HOMOSEXUALITY, by John Boswell; A TRUE LIKENESS: Lesbian and Gay Writing Today, edited by Felice Picano. All titles recorded are solely for the use of print handicapped and can be played only on special cassette players provided through the Library of Congress lending program.

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Disturbed Peace

by Brian McNaught

While I prefer to be gay, my homosexuality results from my "orientation" and not my "preference." The distinction is essential.

In New York City, where the City Council will allegedly soon consider a comprehensive bill to protect gay persons from discrimination in housing and employment, gay spokespersons warn of a major split in the gay community over the words "preference" and "orientation." In Detroit, at the Call to Action conference in which the Catholic Church plotted out five years of social action programs, a delegate attempted to change the wording of one of my resolutions from a listing of various sexual minorities to "sexual orientation." In Boston, the chairperson of one of the Massachusetts House committees was considering one of the three gay civil rights bills asked me if I liked the word "preference" in the bill. I did not. Personally, I don't think most gay persons care about the semantics, but politicians and Church leaders do, and they,

regretably, are the ones who hold the immediate power to pass or defeat gay civil rights.

According to the preponderance of evidence, homosexuals, like heterosexuals and bisexuals, have no choice in their sexual orientation. By the age of five, we have all been fairly well programmed by a variety of stimuli to prefer sexual activity with a particular gender. The word "orientation" clearly means that no initial choice is involved. The word "preference," however, suggests free will and open options.

Some gay spokespersons insist the word "preference" suggests a much-needed positive image, while "orientation" insinuates we are stuck with something we wouldn't freely choose but which we are trying to make the best of. The term "sexual preference" is important to them because they want to clearly communicate that, given a free choice, they would *prefer* to be homosexual.

Church leaders, who in more than one instance have rung the death knell for

gay rights, have an easy out with the words "sexual preference." If we are gay because we prefer to be gay, then we can change our minds. Sin, according to every tradition, must involve choice. Where there is no choice, there is no sin. Where there is no sin, debate on gay civil rights cannot be centered upon the "immorality" of the action.

Many of the nation's liberals who jumped on the civil rights bandwagon for blacks, women, Hispanics, the aged, and the handicapped have been reluctant to support gays because of the issue of choice. Blacks women, the aged, and the handicapped are subject to discrimination for reasons which they have no choice; but it is argued that homosexuals commit an *act* which they don't have to perform if they don't want to.

Battling bias is difficult enough without having to leave the educational process with heterosexuals in order to argue with other gay leaders over verbiage. While I make it clear when given the opportunity that even given the choice I would prefer to be gay, I suggest it is essential that we cope with the potentially negative effects of the word "orientation" in order to effectively make this world the kind of place I would *prefer* to live in.

SEXUALITY is, in the broadest sense, the psychic energy which finds physical and emotional expression in the desire for contact, warmth, tenderness and love;

SEXUAL ORIENTATION is a natural and inborn personal characteristic which governs one's sexuality; it is not chosen, neither is it the result of psychological conditioning or influenced by personal experiences; Any attempt to deny, resist or modify one's natural orientation creates a variety of serious and debilitating emotional and psychological problems as well as constant stress and instability in the individual's life.

SEXUAL PREFERENCE is the instinctive choice of partners according to gender.... providing evidence of an individual's sexual orientation.

As to the CAUSE of homosexuality..... despite more than 50 years of reported theories and explanations, NONE have been supported by scientific research! The origins of both homosexuality and heterosexuality remain a mystery.

Despite the lack of scientific confirmation, many theories are thought to be true because they fit popular stereotypes of homosexual persons.....and, have not only served to intensify society's homophobic attitudes, but also are responsible for a great degree of the despair, emotional pain and stresses experienced by families and individuals (both gay and straight) concerned with variant sexualities.

Perhaps answers would be more readily found if scientists would undertake and examine human sexuality in the broader context of "what generates and determines individual sexual preferences not only for homosexuals ...but for heterosexual and ambisexual persons as well".

From the Mail-Bag: a variety of concerns addressed by P.F.O.G.

- "What can I do to get my family to accept and include my lover at family get-togethers such as Thanksgiving and Christmas?"
- "4 months ago, we discovered our 21 yr old son is a homosexual. He has since left our home at our decision. We're all committed Christians and consider this a real sin...but one which we believe God is able to bring him out of....I am hurting...I feel some guilt and much sorrow for the lifestyle my son has chosed." "Can you help me?"
- "I need to know if this trait (homosexuality) can be passed on to your Grandchildren."
- "I have tried on many occasions to lead a "normal straight" life but I just cannot keep it up. I feel terrible about deceiving people. I really don't know what to do. My parents would be very upset and I would loose many of my friends."
- "I have known since he was twelve and thought he would outgrow it...I have never asked for help before but carried my cross alone....he's put me through HELL for ten years...."
- "My brother has two sons (23 & 29) who are gay and a daughter 27 who is a lesbian. He also has a 14 year old daughter still at home....how can he help her or will she also be a lesbian.....HELP"
- "Does a man have a choice in the matter of sex orientation?.....is it irreversible/.....what can be the cause (of homosexuality) in mid-life when it did not show up on childhood?"
- "My parents don't smoke, drink and are Baptist to the hilt....When the word gay is mentioned on TV or in the newspaper they act like they don't hear or see it....it makes me feel so bad that I sometimes cry....I want them to love me completely as I am....I pray to God...I am a Christian and being gay worries me a lot....I need your help"
- "My parents have recently found out that I am gay and they are overwrought. I cannot fulfill their dreams and expectations. I don't know how to get through to them...I have stopped my life...I don't go out...I am empty....can you help me help them understand that gays are not degenerates....that most of us lead a good, giving and caring life.....it is not their fault...it is not punishment....I am so tired of being labeled a pervert by the ones I love...."
- "My 32yr old son (presently in the Armed Services) has just told me he is gay. He is old enough to choose his own lifestyle...my concern is more for my very dear daughter-in-law and 3 grandchildren.....I know I cannot change anything...but would appreciate any guidance you can offer in this matter"
- "I am presently serving on a church staff with a homosexual which disturbs me greatly.....I would appreciate receiving any literature you can provide to help me"
- "We have just found out our 17 year old daughter is gay....the first thing we did was stop her from associating with her friend....I am very much against this because of my biblical background....please send information on the best thing for us to do"
- "My son tell me he has been gay since he was about 8 yrs old and that he is tired of 'hiding in the closet'...he is now 21...his father is having a very bad time...very bad scenes and terrible name-calling...can you help me to help my husband understand and accept our situation.... Our son has tried to kill himself on two occasions...now that things are out in the open with the family and some of his friends...he feels much better about himself"

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